

VZCZCXR08044
PP RUEHPA
DE RUEHRY #0814/01 3661548
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 311548Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3284
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000814

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2018

TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM PHUM ASEC GV

SUBJECT: MOVING FORWARD WITH THE CNDD - COMMENTS FROM
OPPOSITION LEADER ALPHA CONDE

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4 B AND D

¶1. SUMMARY. Alpha Conde, leader of the Rally for the Guinean People (RPG) political party said he is willing to work with the CNDD as long as it moves to hold legislative and presidential elections by the end of 2009. Comparing Lansana Conte to Mugabe, Conde explained why a coup d'etat was the only solution to Guinea's political crisis and asked that the USG assist the country to move forward. Conde said he is withholding judgment on the CNDD and the new prime minister until he sees whether or not they are capable of doing the job they have taken on. He said "I am ready to mobilize people to force the agenda if need be." END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Poloff met with opposition leader Alpha Conde of the Rally for the Guinean People (RPG) political party for the first time on December 30. Conde last visited Guinea in June 2007. The RPG is generally perceived to be the most radical of the opposition political parties. Its support base is predominantly Malinke with strong representation in Upper Guinea. Conde won about 20% of the national vote in the 1997 presidential elections, and about 17% of the vote in the 2003 elections. Former President Conte threw Alpha Conde in jail shortly after the 2003 elections on charges of treason, for which Conde was later convicted. Conte pardoned Alpha Conde two years later.

GETTING RID OF "MUGABE"

¶3. (C) Conde told Poloff that former President Conte had been at the heart of Guinea's political troubles since 1991. He likened Conte to Mugabe, saying that one of the reasons he has spent so much time out of the country is because someone needed "to make the international community aware" of Guinea's political situation. Conde characterized his many meetings with the Guinean Diaspora and various international leaders as an effort to attract attention and marshal political support. "Fortunately for us, God took care of the change that was needed and now we can begin to move forward," he said.

¶4. (C) Expounding at length about why coup d'etats are necessary in some countries, particularly in Africa, Conde said that a coup was the only way to assure security and civil order since Conte's death left a power vacuum. "It is an imperfect solution, but now we need to focus on the months ahead," he told Poloff. He acknowledged the international community's need to condemn coups, but said that after condemning, everyone should be helping Guinea to transition towards elections and a civilian government. Speaking rhetorically, Conde asked "I know you have to condemn, but I wonder...if there was a coup in Zimbabwe to overthrow Mugabe, would you condemn it too?"

ROLE OF THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT

¶15. (SBU) When asked about the RPG's strategy toward the new government and the transition period, Conde said that the first priority should be to complete the voter registration process. However, he also said that the transitional government should work to fight corruption and hold people responsible for "economic crimes against the country." Conde added that the CNDD should look to the international community for assistance in establishing an international commission of inquiry into the human rights abuses committed in early 2007. "We cannot talk about democracy without addressing weak governance; the government needs to be resolving governance problems while working on elections," he said. Conde added that any former government officials who served in the Conte regime between 2003 and 2008 should be barred from taking positions in the new government since they are responsible for many of the country's current problems.

¶16. (SBU) With respect to civilian participation in the transitional government, Conde said that "the CNDD must be the organ of control; it should not govern, but should supervise and maintain security." Conde added that given the CNDD's security role, it is acceptable that they would appoint military officers to head up the ministries of security and defense, and possibly even justice. He said that the rest of the government should be composed of civilians.

VIEWS ON THE CNDD

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¶17. (C) Poloff noted that there are several problematic personalities on the CNDD, specifically mentioning mutiny leader Claude Pivi. Conde agreed, saying that he had personally spoken out against Pivi in the past, but then said "it is not perfect, but they needed to balance among competing interests in order to preserve peace," indicating that he was willing to accept Pivi's participation in the immediate term. Conde added that the coup was orchestrated by more than one group, which necessitated extensive negotiations among various parties. According to Conde, both Colonel Sekouba Konate and Colonel "Idi Amin" Camara had been offered the position of president, but both refused. The CNDD reportedly settled on Captain Moussa Dadis Camara as an acceptable compromise.

¶18. (C) In response to a question about his impressions of the CNDD, Conde said that he had no immediate comments. He said he is listening to their rhetoric and watching to see if the CNDD delivers on its promises and turns its declarations into reality. "I am ready to mobilize people to force the agenda if need be," he told Poloff.

¶19. (SBU) When asked about the new prime minister, Kabine Komara, Conde said "he is very intelligent and experienced." He added that that he considers Komara competent, but that competence is not enough to do the job well. "You can be competent and still susceptible to corruption," he said, again adopting a wait and see approach.

ELECTIONS SOON, BUT NOT TOO SOON

¶10. (SBU) Turning to a timetable for elections, Conde said that the elections should be held before the end of 2009, but that no one should rush into holding them too fast. Conde said that presidential and legislative elections should be held concurrently. He emphasized that the voter registration process is critical and should be the first priority. Conde estimated that the process still needed three or four more

months before it can be completed.

¶11. (SBU) Before leaving, Conde told Poloff "now that you have condemned the coup, we want you to help us; we need your close involvement and support to advance the electoral process."

COMMENT

¶12. (C) Like rival opposition leaders and civil society representatives, Alpha Conde appeared to be willing to accept the CNDD as an interim government as long as it works toward elections within the next twelve months. However, he was a bit more demanding with respect to the need for civilian participation in the transition process. Conde accepted the USG's condemnation of the coup, but repeatedly emphasized that sanctions would be unhelpful and demoralizing. He was convinced that a coup was necessary as it was the only peaceful mechanism for moving the political process forward.

END COMMENT.

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